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Subject: Follow Thou Me.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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FOLLOW THOU ME.

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following; (which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?) Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."—JNO. XXI., 20–22.

It is evident that the first writing of the Gospel of John terminated at the last clause of the 20th Chapter. It has been thought, by many, on that account, and from the nature of the 21st Chapter, that it was added by another hand; but the ripest opinions, I think, agree, now, that this was a supplementary chapter added by John himself at a later period. Of the four Gospels, the first that was written was that of Matthew; and it is probable that it was written a few years after our Master's decease. Then came the Gospel of Mark; and then, that of Luke, at variable periods, with several years between.

The old tradition is, that on a certain occasion some holy men, elders of the church, came to John, then extremely old—somewhere between ninety and a hundred years of age, probably—and, showing him these three Gospels, asked him to add anything to them which, in his judgment, would make them more complete. And that he thereupon drew up his own Gospel, as adding to the others that which he thought they lacked. Very certain it is that the Gospel of John has more matter which the others have not, than it has of matter which is common to the four. However that may be, his is the last Gospel that was written, and this twenty-first chapter is the last part of the last Gospel. So that when he had read the other Gospels attentively; when he had drawn up his own; and afterwards, while recalling, by memory, the various scenes of his Master's life, having expended the whole force of his narrative upon that part which was enacted around about Jerusalem, the other Evangelists mainly concerning themselves with the Galilean life, John added much which refers to Christ's life in Galilee, and this one incident besides.

Jesus had been declaring to Peter, prophetically, the manner of his death. He was to die a death of violence; and Christ had predicted

SUNDAY MORNING, July 10, 1870. LESSON: 1. THESS., V. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 31, 454.

it. Peter, seeing John following, says to the Master, with that intrusive curiosity, almost meddlesomeness, which belonged to Peter's character, "What shall this man do? I am to be slain; but what is to be the history of this man?" And Jesus said,

"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

John adds,

"Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die."

Misinterpreting the phrase, "If I will that he tarry till I come," men got the notion that John should not die. And he quotes the incident to correct that saying. He declares that the Master did not say that he should not die, but only this:

"*If* I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

He does not expound the meaning of the passage. He uses it simply to refute that rumor, which was founded upon mistake. That there was meaning in it far beyond that which he developed on this occasion, there can be no doubt.

Peter's intrusive boldness seemed, at this time, as usual, to exercise itself in putting every man in his right place. He was unconsciously attempting to govern others, or to find out about others. He did not reflect that it was opposed to the Christ spirit. He did not reflect that personal consecration was the first thing in every man's life, and continuously the most important thing; but he was busy in respect to the probable history and condition of those around about him. As if the external history of any of them was a thing to be compared, for one single moment, with their adhesion to Christ; with the relationship of their spiritual union with their Master and Head!

Or, if Peter's motive were different from this meddlesomeness; it it were an anxiety to know what God provided for his people, and what was to be the providential dealing with his brethren, and particularly with John the beloved, even then it was carrying the matter beyond wisdom, in the presence of Christ, and in the nearness of his parting from them.

In either case, the reply was pertinent—namely, "What is that to thee? Your history is important to you; but what concern is it of yours that another man's history is to be this, or that, or another thing? *Your* history is in me. Follow thou me." And to each man, Christ says, "Follow *thou* me—never mind others."

The emphasis of this cannot be estimated unless we consider that Peter was an apostle, that it was to be his mission to make known the Lord Jesus Christ to men, and that he was about to be sent out to bring in disciples, to found churches, to institute a polity whose main principles should operate to the end of time.

All the more, therefore, it was requisite that he himself should follow Christ, and be filled with his Spirit, not making his mission, nor his external duty, nor his work in time, the main and chief part of his concern, but founding all this work upon a personal, interior experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus as the one thing needful to his immortality.

And we may fairly deduce from this instance several points, such as these:

1. Following Christ is a personal work preceding all official work, underlying it, as the soil out of which all official work is to spring. To follow Christ is to reproduce in ourselves his dispositions, to accept his ideas of life and of duty, to fulfill his commands, and to be in union with him by love and sympathy.

The servant of Christ has all the instruments belonging to the work of education which philosophy has, and has, over and above all others, his own personal experience, by reason of the intimate communion of his soul with the Lord Jesus Christ. The power by which we are to instruct men is not simply the ordinary didactic power. The power by which we are to teach and preach is not simply the expository power which any man may have. It is not that which secular education may give. It is that which has been wrought in us, distinctively and peculiarly and personally. It is that which makes us individual, and our experience individual. It is that which constitutes the personality of every man's ministry in this world. And although the resources of learning are to be availed of, although all ordinary causes are to be employed for ordinary effects, we are never to forget that the distinctive and peculiar power of the Christian teacher or the Christian worker, lies in that which has happened between his soul and God, and which is original, native to him, and distinctive above that of every other. For as no two persons are alike, so the work of grace in no two hearts is alike. And every man has a teaching and a power distinct from that of any other man.

Following Christ, then, is the main preparation, though it is not the only one. It does not disdain any other preparations; but it is that foundation on which all other preparations are to be built. It is that spirit which is to quicken all other influences and instruments. It is that which God hath taught us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, filling our conscience, and giving intuition to our whole moral sense, so that every part of us has been inspired—not authoritatively inspired, but inspired in other respects just as much, and just as really, as the apostles and holy men of old themselves were inspired when they taught sacred things.

2. One is in danger of losing his personal relations with Christ

through a spirit of curiosity and a spirit of anxiety about the cause of Christ in the world—about the cause of events. One may, by a curious studying of the probable line of divine providence, be so absorbed as to lose his own personal identity, I had almost said, as a follower of Christ. This spirit of anxious forelooking is as mischievous in spiritual life as that anxious forethought which Christ dissuades us from is in secular things. And yet, in times of disturbance, in times when it is doubtful which way things are moving, when beliefs are broken up, when new policies invade old ones, when convulsions take place, the heart of many a man broods; and many a Christian man says, "The old paths are better; but the flood is setting in, and the landmarks are being removed, and the deluge of unbelief and uncertainty is coming." And men in thus brooding on the probable history of the church, almost forget that Christ says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Your personal life in Jesus Christ, which is first, and is higher and better than everything else, being secured, you need not be without curiosity, and you are not forbidden to forelook, and to imagine; but, after all, it is from your personal connection with the Lord Jesus Christ that your faith is to come. There is to be your life, and not in what you foresee, nor in what you hope, nor in what you desire, of the outward history of the cause of God in this world.

3. Every man's personal history and duties are so separate, so individual, so private, that he must follow Christ, not in company necessarily, nor as a member of a body, but for himself. Whatever Christian families are in this world—whether they are living according to the world or not; whether they tolerate unlawful pleasures or not; whether they are remiss or not; whether they are ordained according to the mind and will of the Spirit that governs in the spiritual realm, or according to the mind and will of the spirit that governs in this world—this does not concern you half so much as that you follow Christ. Your father and your mother may seem to you to be going wrong; but you are not their judge, except so far as to determine what your duty is. Your brothers and sisters may seem to you to be taking undue liberties; nevertheless the word of the Lord to you, and to each one of you, is, "What is that to thee? Your salvation does not stand in another person's fidelity. That other person may be all right, and you may be all wrong; or he may be all wrong, and you may be all right. Follow thou me, and I will take care of him." We very often are so prone to anxiety through our affections that we often unconsciously assume the attitude of dictation, and carry all the burden that we should carry if men were dependent on us for their salvation, and not upon God.

Whatever churches are—whether they are departing from the faith of the fathers or not; whether they are mixing a vain philosophy with the truth or not; whether they are opening the doors too wide to the world or not; whether they are throwing out ordinances that should be retained, or taking in ordinances that are the work of men's hands; whether they are going up or down—whatever may be their condition, it is not for you to carry their burdens. You are not appointed the bishop of the churches, nor is any man. And the word of the Lord to every man is this: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Not that you have not a right to form judgments; not that you have not a right to have an affectionate solicitude for the welfare of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth; but you have no right to form judments and to have solicitude to any such extent as to disturb your peace—certainly not to any such extent as that you shall carry any additional burdens. And yet there are men in the world who imagine themselves to be set apart and foreordained to murmur and repine. And forever they see the dark side of all movements. And they pray against the defections of the churches. They talk about the defections of the churches. They are full of murmurings and repinings about the defections of the churches. They are so full of other men's misdeeds and supposed faults, that they have little spirit left, and little time left, for their own personal edification in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord says to these heresy-hunting grumblers, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me, and I will take care of heretics."

Whatever the community is; whatever may be the fate of nations; whether wars are coming or revolutions are impending; whether the cause of the common people seems to be in darkness and to be growing worse, as in the great reaction of 1848; or whether all combinations seem to point forward to the history of the laboring men, and of the common people, and the mass of mankind are prosperous in the prospect—whatever may be the condition of the community, your prior duty is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you give yourself to these other things, not ordained to be a prophet, not called to be a leader, Christ says to you, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

In the midst of all convulsions, in the midst of all uncertainties, how many times men think that there is almost no use in trying to be good! "Who knows," say they, "which way to go? Ministers are disputing; churches are worldly-minded; the foundations are broken up; and who cares for holy things? A man might as well cast his lot in with them, and take things as he finds them." Thousands and thousands of men have been almost tempted to give up serving religion, and have said, "Things are mixed and uncertain; so

they have been since the world began; and so they will be until the the world ends; and I will take them just as I find them, and enjoy myself." In other words, in the baldest form, it is saying, "O Soul! eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow thou diest." There are a great many persons who are discouraged, and who feel that self-denial, and humility, and painstaking, and real personal discipline, are of no use; and say, "When nobody else tries to live so, why should I so live?" But Christ says to every man, "Follow thou me." Let the pope go; let the bishop go; let the priest go; let the minister go; let the church go. To each man for himself, and to every man on the globe, the Lord says, "Be faithful personally to me."

But this subject may be brought home even more closely than in these general ways. There are those who are obscured and perplexed in the disputes that obtain in respect to ordinances and doctrines and orders within the church. They are the prey of men who desire to make proselytes. They are pulled hither and thither.. They are exhorted by this one or that one. They defer the work of personal holiness until they shall have settled these absolutely unsettleable questions in respect to the authority, the organization, the order, of the instruments of religion—namely, the outward churches.

There be many persons who will tell you that their faith has almost failed them. They have heard so much and seen so much of disagreement, and the whole question of the authority of the church, and of its various impositions and duties, is in such a condition in their mind, that they are almost tempted to give up the whole matter in disgust. Of those who, in the providence of God, are surrounded by influences which stir up men's attention to external order, there are many who are caught in these infinitesimal disputes about infinitesimal things—about colors; about the cut and form of garments; about the order of coming in or going out; about the points of the compass (for it is immensely important in the salvation of a man's soul that he should read with his face toward the right point of the compass). They are so disturbed as to whether the right hand was put on the right head, and whether this right head put its right hand on somebody else's right head; they are so disturbed as to the whole outward circumstances which relate to religion, that they are in danger of quite forgetting the Lord that bought them. Oh! what matters it whether your mother's name was Gates, or Bates, or Page, or Smith? What matters it whether she was nearly related to such and such an one or not? What matters it whether you know who she was or not? She is your mother, and that is enough. The main thing is that the heart and the love which you bear to her tell you everything. Strip off the whole history; let what will happen externally, it will be all as nothing. It

will not move nor disturb the central impulse of your life. A child loves its mother, not because she was of this or that family, or of this or that connection, but simply from what she is to the child.

Let those settle these questions who may or must, who will or can; but let every man who stands in this great flurry of ecclesiology, let every man who stands perplexed in bat-like twilight, seeking to fly, remember that the main thing, after all, is that the heart shall be inflamed with love toward the Lord Jesus Christ, so that, as the child follows the mother, every one shall follow him, and be perfectly certain in the last great day, when we rise, in the forefront of the universe he will stand; and let us remember that if we have followed him, and our hearts have felt his heart all through life, no matter what priests say about us, no matter what churches say about us, the words will come to us from him, "Well done; well done."

And in respect to these disturbing influences where the providence of God has cast you, I do not say, "Go out of that church and go into a more simple one." *Let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called.* As respects all these external things, do not busy yourself about them; do not listen to them; do not care for them. "Follow me," says the Lord Jesus Christ. You are to make it the business of your life to follow Christ and to love him.

Parents often stand in the light of their own good, and even weaken their moral power, by an undue and improper anxiety for their own children. There may be an anxiety for one's children which shall leave the impression on the child's mind that you have no faith in God. Else why such anxiety? Parents may be so anxious for the welfare of their children that they have very little peace, very little joy, very little trust in God. In order that our hearts may ring out to our children in the sweet music of true religion, those hearts must not be touched. If you lay your hand upon a bell when you strike it, it is muffled, and the sound does not come forth. Take off your hand, and everything, and let the bell sound out sweet and clear. The heart must not be muffled by these anxieties and fears and torments.

"To be sure," it is said, "the parent who loves the child must be anxious that it shall do well." Yes; but hope is a better counsellor than fear, for parents. It is just as easy for your mother to say, "The God that has taken care of me will take care of my children. I will trust him who has never left me nor forsaken me, and who has given me the right to cast my care on him because he careth for me. Not my vigilance, not my skill, not my wisdom, will I trust. I acknowledge that I do not know how to take care of these my little ones; but God knows, and I will leave them in his hands." My dear friends, wonderful is the way of God with children. How many children there

are that come up in spite of their parents! How many parents there are who do enough to destroy, it would seem, the very possibility of their children ever coming to manliness and integrity, but whose children escape in spite of parental perversion, and come up to honorable and useful manhood! And how many children are surrounded by parents who, though they are exemplary, are overborne by anxiety, and who are afraid, not only of the devil in general, but of everything in particular—afraid of the least thing; afraid of the shaking of the leaf; afraid of exposing their children to the slightest temptation; and who bring up those children in such a way as to produce the impression on the child's mind that the parent is burdened and untrustful, and has but little help from above. That the parent expects that there is going to be some comfort hereafter, the child is led to believe; but there is no impression made upon the child's mind that there is any expectation on the part of the parent of immediate relief. And to-day the Lord Jesus Christ stands in every nursery, and by the side of the cradle of every loving mother, and of every Christian father, and says, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." And if you follow Christ, the fruits of that following—sweet peace, and rich content, and unbounded trust in God—will be the very elements, without any wisdom or management on your part, by which your children will be brought out right. Do not, therefore, let your children disturb your settled peace. Do not let your trust be sacrificed through an unwise anxiety about those who are under your charge. Understand that the love of Christ in your soul is the best means of bringing your children in the way they should go; let them see the evidences and results of true holiness in you. Your gentleness, your forgiveness, your patience, your faith in the invisible, your trust in an unknown and unseen God, will be more preaching to them than all the didactic instruction which you can give them—though this should not be omitted.

So it is with teachers of all kinds, with preachers pre-eminently, who are the teachers of the Lord, and with all who labor for men's religious education. They are in danger of emphasizing exetrior things, and forgetting the true interior and spiritual elements. In all such instruction, personal piety is the power of teaching. It is that which a man is between his soul and God that gives him cogency, and, under the divine providence, brings forth fruit in others. It is quite possible for men to be busy with the outwardness of their work, for them to be given to a secular administration of it, and yet be conscientious, painstaking, faithful persons. But they will have very little comfort in it. And Christ would warn every such one, saying, of all

this outward history, "What is that to thee? This is thy business—follow thou me."

It would be a word of caution, too, for busybodies in spiritual things—for there are busybodies in spiritual things as really as in things social and temporal. There are men who have adopted the cant words of the day, and who are all the time talking about *saving men's souls.* The moment they are converted, they think that means that they are to be *saving souls.* And they pray about *saving souls.* And they exhort to the *salvation of souls.* They are constantly running around and trying to *save men's souls.* Christ would say to them, "Save your own souls first." To do that, needs a great deal of care. It is far more important that a man should be built up in a holy and devout and deeply spiritual life, than that he should be running round for volunteers long before he himself understands the spiritual drill. And when men have been consecrated to the work of doing good, it is far more important that they, having begun a Christian life, should be built up, than that there should be gathered in raw recruits who know nothing. There be those who are overloading the church with crude material; and the church, like an overloaded wain, groans with this crude material, which is in danger of spoiling in keeping. There be those who seem to think that the great work of the ministry is to be the alarming and converting of men, and the saving of their souls.

Now, the way of salvation is through sanctification, and he who would have the cure of souls should understand that to make men holy who have begun to be Christians, is, among other things, the most providential way of saving those who are not professors of religion. While I would not do anything which would take from you enterprise; while, within due bounds, and at discretion, it is the duty of every Christian man, as God gives him opportunity, to save men, snatching them as brands from the burning, if they are in extreme peril, and by kind words, at proper times, win them to religious things; and while I would not lighten the motives to this, I would caution you against making your religion to stand in this running about to *save men's souls.* Christ would say to you, under such circumstances, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Practice for a little while before you begin to preach to others.

That which is true in all the instances which I have stated, is still more signally true in relation to Christian sects into which the church of Christ is divided. I have never been of those who thought sects were, in and of themselves, evil. Where they have been exploded and formed by explosion; where they have, by misdirected assault, been rendered bitter; where they have been selfish and exclusive, there has

been great mischief in connection with this subdivision of the great body of men in Christian life. But it has been because the sects have allowed themselves to use the malign elements as instruments in their Christian warfare. The mere fact of the subdivision of the multitude of men into different organizations, with different politics and governments, and even different modes of administration, is not in itself singular. It is inevitable. You can no more make them alike than you can make any two towns alike in their modes of governing, or any two families alike in their methods of administration. For, as the families in a neighborhood are held to great generic rules—those, for instance, of truth, and honor, and industry, and personal purity, but, within these generics vary infinitely in their modes of administering the economies of the household; so in the families that spring up under the Lord Jesus Christ in this world, there will be infinite diversities. And where the populations are large, there is no reason why those who are of one mind—that is, those who are in elective affinity—and who are thrown together, should not coöperate with each other in the administration of the affairs of the church, as seems wise to them. Sects are not in themselves, but only in the unwise modes of their administration, mischievous, and evil, and to be deplored.

You will never have one church in the sense in which men are looking for it. Blessed be God for that. One church such as men are looking for would be a very stupid thing. It would be the extinction of that individual, sharp personality out of which comes variety. And the riches of mankind are in variations. All growths tend to diversity. All development is in the direction of complexity. And persons who are capable of being reduced to absolute unity are personally very low in the scale—very near to zero. Otherwise they could not coalesce, and come into perfect unity. And all those great sects that suppose themselves to be units, are not. There are materials for diversity within them. They are full of unexplored and unexpressed forces. They are full of undelivered or undeveloped variations of belief. They are held in reserve, and kept down. They are either like winter, when all seeds and roots are waiting to grow by-and-by, but are not growing; or, they are like magazines that are stored full of mischievous missiles that by-and-by will be touched off. There is no such thing as unity, there never was, and there never will be.

The word of the Lord, therefore, to those who are with sects that are seeking to destroy themselves and built up the one spirit of this, that or the other organization, is, "What is that to thee?" If men like to be baptized by immersion, let them. If men like to be baptized by sprinkling, let them. If men like to have preachers ordained by bishops, in the name of the Lord, let them. And if men like to have

preachers that never had a bishop's hand on them, let them. "Follow thou me," says Christ. Let every sect, instead of attempting to bring itself nearer to God, and making itself more acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ by absurd historical arguments, do what every horticulturalist is obliged to do. It is quite in vain for him to boast of the superiority of his fruits and flowers, or to assert that his orchard or garden is better than anybody else's. He must bring forward flowers and fruits that the judges will say are better than those of others. And then it does not matter what name you put on them or whether you put any name on them at all. "By their fruits ye shall know them," says every horticultural committee; and so said Christ.

Now, if it is understood that that is the best sect which makes the best men; if we are at liberty to call on the different sects to show the highest results of their training, then I am satisfied. Let them be judged according to their merits. And if the Roman Catholics can prove that they make better men than we Protestants do, that ends the argument with me. I am going in for the sect that makes the greatest number of men of the best sort. Bring in your Calvinists; and if they make magnificent, strong men, but make only a few of them, and crush all the weak for the sake of making these few almost supernaturally strong men, it is not my ideal of a church. But show me the sect that makes the largest number of men high and noble, and I am for that. If it be Calvinism, with its "five points" accuminated, and sharper than the "pricks" against which Paul kicked, I will take it. Or, if it be Arminianism I will take it. I do not care for arguments. Go away with your texts. Show me the men that you have made. Some of you drill by Upton's tactics, and some of you by the French tactics; some of you employ one system, and some another; but I do not care whose tactics you drill by, let me see your men fight; and after the campaign I will tell you which turns out the best soldiers. I will admit that drill has something to do with these things; but I declare that that army which wins victories oftenest, and on the broadest scale, is composed of the best material. And though I believe that some sects are far better than others, and that some views of doctrine are far more likely to produce good results than others; and though in laying the foundations of a sect I should be very careful in making selections of men and measures and views of truth; yet, after all, the true test as to the value of the different sects, as they exist, is that which determines which has produced the best results. Those sects which produce the greatest number of eminent Christian men, those sects which fill the garden of the Lord most abundantly with the best fruits, are the wisest and most efficient in their administration.

If that responsibility were brought to bear on the sects, how great

a change there would be! How we should cease boasting! How we should cease arraying ourselves, with external arguments, one against another! How we should feel that the Lord had said to every man, whether he be layman or minister, "Follow thou me!"

Following Christ personally, individually, as well as collectively, is our great business—not following him in a certain way; not following him by giving services and ordinances and ceremonies; not following him in externals; but following him in trust, in joy, in peace, in hope, in love, in faith in the invisible. And they are the best Christians who, following Christ thus, follow him the most closely.

This is a severe test; it is a different test from that by which men usually measure themselves; and it is a test which, if strictly applied, would destroy sectarians, mostly.

May God grant that we may have this test by which to measure ourselves. We are not what we are by reason of our knowledge, nor by reason of our will-power, but by the degree in which we represent and reflect the mind and will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian brethren, you are not safe because you are in this or that fold. You are not safe because of any covenants or promises. You are not safe because of the fulfillment of any duties in this or that direction. Your whole hope, your whole safety, lies in this, that you are following Christ, and that his spirit and your spirit are in such sympathy with each other that he lives in you, and you live in him.

And in this spirit of following Christ, let us gather together, this morning, as we propose to do for the last time this summer as a church, and as Christian brethren of every name, to accept Christ as our Master, our Guide, our Joy, and our everlasting Reward. I affectionately invite all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, and who put their whole hope of salvation in the faith of his love to their souls, to tarry with us, if it be convenient for them, and partake with us of the emblems of his dying love.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We acknowledge thee, Almighty God, to be our Governor. Thou art our Teacher, and thee we would obey and follow. We confess that we have not followed thee even according to our knowledge; that we have turned aside, and that we do every day turn aside, from the right way. Our own conscience condemns us; and thou art greater than our conscience. Even by the feeble light of our own knowledge, we see the better way, while we are pursuing the worse. But, how much higher than ours is thy conception of that which is just, and pure, and true, and righteous. If thou wert to measure us by that same law by which thou dost measure thyself; if thou shouldst account with us, as with thine own angels in heaven, who of us could stand? We are as little children in the presence of those who are grown in knowledge and experience. We know not anything, and are filled with mistakes, and easily run into transgressions and into conscious and purposed errors. And we need every day thy forbearing love. We need thy patience and thy forgiveness in which hath been, in every age, the hope of the world. Thou dost not delight to destroy. Thou dost delight to save, to make alive, those that are dead; to cleanse those that are impure; to make whole the wounded; to go after the lost; to reclaim them; to seek and rescue them. And we rejoice that thy work has not expended itself, and that it is not a power unused; and that thy truth, and all the means by which it is surrounded, are yet living instruments, and that thou dost own them, and bless them. And we behold thy churches built up, and multitudes reclaimed from evil, and the ways of the Lord thronged. And we rejoice to believe that thou wilt never leave thyself without a seed to serve thee.

We beseech of thee, this morning, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the service of the sanctuary, in thine own midst. Hear the voices of all that are supplicating thee this morning in their own behalf, or in the behalf of those who are near and dear to them. Accept the thanksgivings of those who offer thanks. Grant, we pray thee, that there may be a willing heart to make confession, on the part of all burdened consciences. May that distance which care and worldliness puts between our thoughts and thee this day, be quite dissipated; and may all of us be able to draw very near to thee.

And we pray, O Lord, that we may have some sense of the great and wondrous love wherewith thou hast loved us, and with which thou dost love us. May we feel that we are dwelling in the midst of thy divine thoughts of mercy, that we are nourished by thee, and that the whole life which we have, and all its power, of pleasure and of joy, is of thee, and is daily sustained by thee. And may it be but a little thing for us to serve thee, that art serving us continually.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon all the families that are represented in this congregation. If there be any absent from us to day, wilt thou fill them with thoughts of mercy. And as their hearts turn again to this place, and to all the remembrances of scenes gone by in days past, we pray that the Spirit of the sanctuary may be wafted to them, and that they may partake of the blessings which we have in coming here. Bless, we pray thee, wanderers who are upon the sea or upon the land, near or far, and preserve them in thy good providence. Speed them in their errands, and bring them back again to the hearts that love them.

We pray for all that are strangers to day in our midst, in strange places, with new associations. Grant that there may be the old love, the blessed spirit of God, that long hath known them. May they find thee the same here to day. May their prayers arise with acceptance before thee. May they rejoice in the sacred songs of thy sanctuary, and find this the house of God, and therefore a home for their hearts. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless

all our citizens of every name, that worship thee this day. Grant that all those who are in error may more and more see the truth.

Bless this nation. Bless all the states and their governments. Bless the government of the United States. Grant that thy servant, the President, may walk in the spirit of wisdom. May he fear God, and do justly. We pray that thou wilt bless all who are associated with him in counsel. Bless the legislature of the nation. Grant, we pray thee, that fidelity, and equity, and purity may be the stability of our times.

We pray that thou wilt bless the nations of the earth, and gather them, according to thy promises, at last, into a great realm of peace, from which are banished ignorance, and superstition, and all wrong. Grant that at last the birthright of the world may come, and Christ descend to reign for a thousand years.

And to thy name shall be the praise for ever and for ever. *Amen.*

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